

Message Text

PAGE 01 STATE 121610

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ORIGIN AID-38

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 ISO-00 OES-03 PC-01 USIA-06 IO-10

INR-07 DODE-00 AGR-05 INT-05 COME-00 /094 R

DRAFTED BY AFR/CWR/SDU:JKELLY:CML

APPROVED BY AFR/CWR:ICOKER

AFR/CWR:DSHEAR (DRAFT)

DAA/AFR:DSBROWN (DRAFT)

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3V ACTION AFR INFO OFP TAAG C CALI CMGT CPS CT CTR FFP CHRON 1 2 8

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P R 232308Z MAY 75

FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY NIAMEY PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY COTONOU PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ROME

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AFDROUGHT

E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS:

SUBJECT:COTONOU-GAO SHIPMENTS

REF: COTONOU 670

1. AID/W HAS COMPLETED REVIEW OF CURRENT GAO FOOD SUPPLY SITUATION AND SUGGESTS FOLLOWING ORDER-OF-PRIORITIES IN EFFORT TO SUCCESSFULLY MOVE 2,500 MT OF U.S. SORGHUM TO GAO BY END OF JUNE.

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PAGE 02 STATE 121610

2. FIRST CONSIDERATION SHOULD BE GIVEN TO ASSESSING CURRENT FEASIBILITY OF EVACUATING 2,500 MT FROM COTONOU TO GAO USING NON-MALI TRUCKS. ADDITIONAL COST INVOLVED IN USING TRUCKS RATHER THAN RAIL (FROM COTONOU TO PARAKOU) WOULD PROBABLY

BE OFFSET BY ELIMINATION OF OCDN RAIL PROBLEMS AS WELL AS NECESSITY OF SECOND LOADING AT PARAKOU, AND BY SHORTER TRIP DURATION (I.E., FOUR DAYS). RECENT REPORTING HAS SHOWN THAT FEW TRUCKS ARE CURRENTLY MAKING RUN FROM COTONOU TO NIAMEY EVEN THOUGH (A) MRGD IS NO LONGER INSISTING ON MONOPOLY RIGHTS BY RAIL FROM COTONOU TO PARAKOU AND (B) DEMAND FOR TRUCKS IN NIGER IS PROBABLY NOT AS GREAT AS LAST YEAR AT THIS TIME DUE SIGNIFICANT DECREASE IN DONOR FOOD SHIPMENTS. REQUEST FFPO PEARSON MAKE PRIORITY ASSESSMENT OF FEASIBILITY THIS MODE OF EVACUATION AND ADVISE REDSO/NEVIN ON COST

FACTORS.

3. IF OPTION OUTLINED PARA TWO ABOVE DOES NOT PROVE FEASIBLE, NEXT PREFERENCE WOULD BE TO MOVE COTONOU STOCKS VIA RAIL AND TRUCK TO GAO. (APPROXIMATE COST DOLLARS 130 PER TON; TRIP DURATION SIX DAYS). SUCCESSFUL USE OF THIS MODE DEPENDS EITHER ON (A) SHARP INCREASE DURING LATE MAY-JUNE IN OC8N EVACUATION RATE OF COMMODITIES FROM COTONOU OR (B) OBTAINING A PRIORITY FOR EMERGENCY FOOD GRAIN BEING FORWARDED TO GAO. REQUEST AID REP AND WFP/COTONOU CONTINUE REGULAR SESSIONS WITH OCDN DIRECTOR IN ATTEMPT TO SORT OUT INTER ALIA MYSTERY OF FORTY MISSING RAIL CARS. AS NOTED REFTTEL, CAPACITY OF RAIL SUGGESTS JUNE-JULY TARGETS FOR EVACUATION OF PORT STOCKS ARE WELL WITHIN OCDN'S REACH. AID/W WILL FOLLOW CLOSELY EVACUATION FIGURES FOR PERIOD MAY 18-31 TO DETERMINE WHETHER OPTION MENTIONED PARA 4 BELOW SHOULD BE PURSUED.

4. THIRD PREFERENCE, FAILING ONE AND TWO ABOVE, WOULD BE TO BORROW 2,500 MT U.S.-DONATED SORGHUM STOCKS CURRENTLY STORED IN NIGER, FORWARD TO GAO AND REPLACE WITH SORGHUM STOCKS SCHEDULED TO ARRIVE COTONOU DURING JUNE. ALTHOUGH AID/W NOT RPT NOT YET WILLING TO PURSUE THIS OPTION, BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL IF RDO/FFPO PEARSON INFORMALLY SEEK OUT VIEWS OF APPROPRIATE GON OFFICIALS ON POSSIBILITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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PAGE 03 STATE 121610

OF STOCK SUBSTITUTION AND ASCERTAIN CURRENT CONDITION OF NIGER GRAIN STOCKS LIKELY TO BE UTILIZED FOR GAO SUPPLY. OUR READING OF NIGER STOCK SITUATION SUGGESTS SHORTAGE WILL NOT ARISE THIS RAINY SEASON AND GON MAY BE RECEPTIVE TO SUBSTITUTION SUGGESTION. WISH TO STRESS, HOWEVER, THAT THIS IS A FALL-BACK POSITION WHICH WILL BE RESORTED TO ONLY AFTER FEASIBILITY OF APPROACHES IN PARAS 2 AND 3 HAS BEEN FULLY DETERMINED.

5. ALTHOUGH AID/W HAS AN OPEN MIND ON POSSIBILITY OF USING MALI-BASED TRUCKS FOR EVACUATION OF COTONOU STOCKS, IT APPEARS THAT COSTS OF THIS VENTURE WOULD BE DOUBLE THOSE INCURRED BY USE OF MODES MENTIONED PARAS 2 AND 3 ABOVE.

FURTHER, THE WORKING-OUT OF VARIOUS BORDER PROBLEMS (EVEN AFTER SUGGESTED PRESIDENTIAL DIALOGUES) WOULD PROBABLY PROVE EXCESSIVELY TIME CONSUMING. CONSEQUENTLY, LOWEST PRIORITY IS BEING ACCORDED USE OF MALI-BASED TRUCKS. WILL COMMENT FURTHER AFTER RECEIPT OF AID REP/COTONOU AND REDSO CONTRACT OFFICER VIEWS ON DRAHANE OFFER WHICH IS TO BE MADE ON MAY 26.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 26 AUG 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: AFDROUGHT, CARGO, FOOD ASSISTANCE, SORGHUM, TRUCKS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 23 MAY 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: greeneet
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975STATE121610
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AFR/CWR/SDU:JKELLY:CML
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: D750182-0635
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t197505103/baaaakrl.tel
Line Count: 120
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, TEXT ON MICROFILM
Office: ORIGIN AID
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: greeneet
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 JUN 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 JUN 2003 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <15 OCT 2003 by greeneet>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
05 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: <DBA CORRECTED> jms 971014
Subject: n/a
TAGS: EAID, NG, US
To: NIAMEY
COTONOU INFO BAMAKO
OUAGADOUGOU
ABIDJAN
ROME
Type: TE

Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 05 JUL 2006